

REMARKS

This Amendment addresses the issues outstanding from the final Office Action dated April 14, 2006.

Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration of this application, as amended.

The specification has been amended to correct an apparent error.

Claims 1-6 are previously presented, with Claims 1-3 being independent. Claims 7-18 have been added to provide more comprehensive protection for the invention, with Claims 7, 11 and 15 being independent. Thus, Claims 1-18 are pending in this application.

Claims 1-6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kobayashi (US 2001/0001932 A1) in view of Table H-2 from "Mechanics of Materials" by James M. Gere (Table H-2). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Initially, regarding Kobayashi, Applicants respectfully observe that the asserted rationale for the rejection mischaracterizes the actual teachings of the reference. The rejection asserts that the reference "only states that the elastic member (147) is molded of material 'such as' NBR or CR, meaning that the elastic member could be made of another material as long as it has a high impact absorbing ability." Office Action, page 3. What Kobayashi actually discloses, however, is that his elastic member is "molded of rubber,

such as NBR, CR, and similar relatively soft material." Kobayashi, page 3, paragraph [0035] (emphasis added). Thus, to the extent that Kobayashi contemplates materials other than rubber NBR or CR, the reference contemplates only "similar relatively soft material."

Applicants do not claim a similar relatively soft material as contemplated by Kobayashi. Polyethylene, as was mentioned in the outstanding Office Action for example, is a comparatively hard material and, in fact, has a Young's modulus many times greater than that of rubber, as is plainly evident from the applied secondary reference, Table H-2. Note also that a polyurethane material is specifically recited in Applicants' dependent claims.

There is nothing in Kobayashi or in Table H-2 that would have suggested the use of polyethylene, or any material as claimed, in Kobayashi's device. Indeed, such a combination is contraindicated by Kobayashi's explicit teaching of rubber and "similar relatively soft material."

As will be appreciated from the foregoing discussion, the outstanding rejection of Claims 1-3 is clearly untenable. Accordingly, it is respectfully urged that the rejection be withdrawn and that Claims 1-3, and their dependents, now be allowed.


Newly presented Claims 7-18 evidently also distinguish patentably from the cited references.

An early Notice of Allowance is therefore respectfully solicited.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 (XA-10199) any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 that may be required by this paper and to credit any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing of this paper and has not been separately requested, such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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